

President has seen

THE WHITE HOUSE (3510)

WASHINGTON

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August 2, 1973

State Dept review completed

MEETING WITH ALBERT BERNARD BONGO

PRESIDENT OF GABON  
Thursday, August 2, 1973  
10:00 a.m. (30 Minutes)  
The Oval Office

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE  
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

From: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

I. PURPOSE

To demonstrate the value we place on our friendship and commercial ties with Gabon, to show our appreciation for Bongo's support in the UN and elsewhere, and to encourage his moderate views and acceptance of American investment.

II. BACKGROUND, PARTICIPANTS, PRESS PLAN

A. Background. President Bongo is on a private visit to the United States primarily to receive an honorary degree at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. This is his first trip to the US except for a brief visit to New York in 1970. He has been seeking an opportunity to meet you for some time. He has been a good friend of the United States. Bethlehem and U.S. Steel have major mining interests in Gabon, and Gulf Oil is engaged in extensive petroleum development work there. Gabon consistently has supported the United States in the UN and elsewhere and Bongo is a moderate in African circles. During your conversation with Bongo, Mrs. Nixon is hosting a small coffee for Mrs. Bongo. The Vice President is hosting a working luncheon for President Bongo August 2. Secretary Rogers is giving a luncheon August 3. President Bongo does not speak English.

B. Participants.

Henry A. Kissinger  
Alec G. Toumayan, Department of State Interpreter.

C. Press Plan. Press photo opportunity. The meeting has been announced. Ziegler will give press briefing on the results of the meeting.

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III. TALKING POINTS

1. It is a great pleasure to meet you. I am gratified that our countries and peoples enjoy such good relations. We share many common objectives, particularly in seeking to advance individual human rights and in promoting respect for the diversity and independence of African nations. It has been extremely rewarding to work with your representatives in these very vital pursuits at the United Nations over the years.
2. Your country has been blessed with abundant mineral resources. I believe you are pursuing a wise course in encouraging private investors from abroad to assist in the development of these resources. I have been pleased at the warm commercial relations developing between our two countries. My Government will continue to encourage U. S. business firms to investigate investment opportunities in Gabon.
3. [If asked] As a complement to your industrial development, it is most appropriate that you are developing your transportation infrastructure. There are of course many needs, but I believe that assistance in completing the railroad represents the most appropriate use of U. S. assistance.

[FYI - Gabon's major economic project for the 1970's will be the Trans-Gabon Railway. The U. S. contribution is \$20 million from Ex-Im Bank for the Railway and \$5 million from AID for feeder roads. Bongo may probe for additional aid to the Railway, or other projects.]

4. [If asked] I appreciate your invitation to send a representative to the celebration of Gabon's Thirteenth National Day on August 17. We will be responding through our Embassy very soon.

[FYI - While there are no foreign policy reasons for sending a special representative this year, the matter is being discussed between State and White House staffs.]

5. [If desired] From the perspective of six years as President of your country, how would you assess the international environment for dealing with the particular problems unique to developing countries, and what can industrialized nations do to improve this atmosphere

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(institutionally and in our policies)?

6. [If asked] I appreciate your invitation to visit Gabon. While at present, I have no definite plans for a visit to Africa, if such an opportunity becomes possible, I will advise you further.

[FYI - Gabon has a standing invitation to you for a visit; first presented in 1971 and reiterated this past April.]

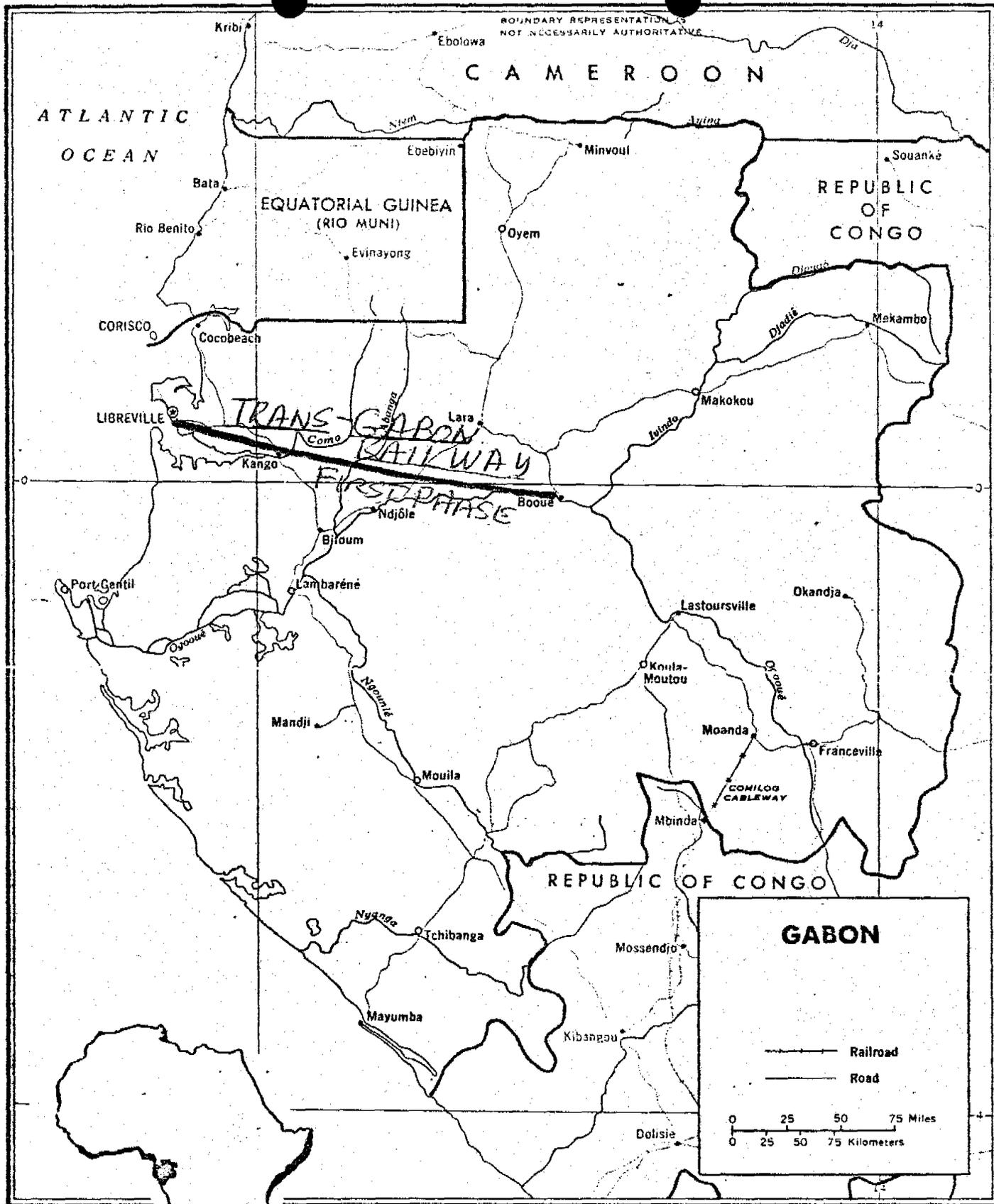
**Attachments:**

Tab A - Map of Gabon

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Tab C - Memo from Department of State

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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July 27, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Visit of President Bernard Bongo of Gabon

President Bernard Bongo of Gabon has accepted President Nixon's invitation to call at the White House on August 2, 1973 at 10 a.m.

Bongo has been seeking this opportunity for some time because he has never met the President, and because he is a great admirer of the United States. He is particularly pleased with the state of American-Gabonese relations.

Gabon is very closely tied to France through economic, military and cultural agreements. The French private sector plays the predominant role in the economy. An important objective for Bongo is to demonstrate to his own people that he has access to world leaders such as President Nixon, and that his foreign policy is not exclusively focused on France.

Bongo has been a good friend of the United States. He has welcomed American investment. Bethlehem and US Steel have major mining interests, and Gulf Oil is engaged in extensive petroleum development work. On international issues, Gabon has consistently supported the US in the UN and elsewhere. He is a moderate in African circles, and is flatly opposed to violent solutions to the southern African problem.

Bongo has also been helpful to us with some problems concerning other African governments. When Congo (Brazzaville) informed the press they might be willing to resume relations with the US, Bongo served as an

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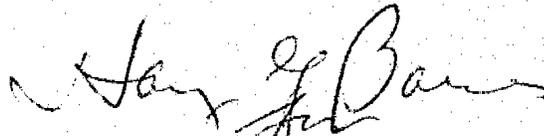
intermediary and determined that while the Brazzaville Government was interested, it was not yet ready to take the necessary action. When there were a number of forged documents circulating in central Africa last year falsely accusing the US of political subversion, Bongo assisted in the delicate task of persuading CAR President Bokassa to ask the US Government for an analysis before taking precipitous action.

Our objective is to show our appreciation for his support, to encourage him to continue on a moderate path, and to emphasize the private sector as the best source of American development capital for Gabon.

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An issues and talking points paper, [redacted] and a background paper are attached.

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Theodore L. Eliot, Jr.  
Executive Secretary

Attachments:

1. Issues and Talking Points for the President [redacted]
3. Background paper

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Issues and Talking PointsGeneral Remarks

We recommend that you:

-- express great pleasure at meeting President Bongo for the first time.

-- thank him for his government's consistent support at the United Nations on issues of importance to the US, especially Chinese representation and the 25% assessment question.

-- state that you share his confidence in Ambassador McKesson who has done much to improve understanding between our two governments.

-- indicate how pleased you were in 1972 to join Bongo as co-International Honorary Chairman of the Albert Schweitzer Hospital Campaign. (Dr. Paul Dudley White made the recommendation.)

Issues President Bongo May Raise

Economic Development - Gabon's major economic project of the 1970s, and Bongo's political showpiece, will be the Trans-Gabon Railway. This \$200 million project will open the interior rain forests to the sea. A second phase planned for the 1980s will extend the railroad to the iron ore deposits in the northeast. Financing for phase one was arranged on July 11 by pledges from the French, the Common Market, the United States, and the private sector. Gabon is providing \$40 million of its own money. The US contribution is \$20 million from Eximbank, and \$5 million from AID which will finance required feeder roads for the timber exports. Bongo is very pleased that the projects can now go ahead, and is happy with the US contribution. However, he may probe for additional aid to the railway or for assistance to other projects. With a per capital annual income of over \$600, Gabon does not need concessional aid. Bongo should look to the private sector for major resource inputs.

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We recommend that you:

-- express pleasure that the US is able to make available \$25 million to the railway and associated roads.

-- with respect to other possible requests, say that the US would prefer to concentrate its assistance in Gabon's most important development project...the railroad.

-- say how much we appreciate Gabon's warm welcome to investments of the ~~US~~ private sector which now amount to about \$150 million.

-- congratulate Bongo for scheduling appointments with business leaders during his stay in the US because we feel the private sector can make a major contribution to Gabonese development.

-- assure him that the American Government will continue to encourage US business firms to investigate investment opportunities in Gabon, and will continue to give favorable reports on the investment climate in Gabon.

Department of State  
July 1973

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